

Undetermined Subjectivity through Unusual Performance

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Abstract — This paper will works on Margaret Atwood, *the Alias Grace*. It will explore the subjectivity alongside the discussion of performativity of gender .In this paper, we ask how Butler's idea on gender and identity can help us to understand that some legal actions produce the subject, the woman. It will explore that how the court fails to provides Grace with the opportunity to explain her perceived 'grotesque' behavior. By constructing Grace as a 'grotesque woman' the court at the same time bars Grace from explaining her 'grotesque' behavior. Thus, she is silenced or implicitly censored although Grace as a female gender constructs a new subjective performance and she achieves it though madness and memory.

Keywords —Subjectivity; Identity; Performance; Self; Gender

1. Introduction

Butler originated the theory that gender is not an essential quality but rather a performative one. She applauds Beauvoir's claim that "one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one," as well as the challenge her work posed to essentialist notions of gender that would bind it to an irreducible material sex (Dreyfus and Wrathall, 496). When Beauvoir claims that woman is a historical idea and she is not a natural fact, she clearly underscores the distinction between sex, as biological facticity, and gender, as the cultural interpretation or signification of that facticity. According to that distinction

to be female is a facticity which has no meaning, but to be a woman is to have become a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of woman,' to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project (Butler, 522) .

Butler describes gender identity as:

If there is something right in Beauvoir's claim that one is not born, but rather becomes a woman, it follows that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, and a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification. [...] It is, for Beauvoir, never possible finally to become a woman, as if there were a *telos* that governs the process of acculturation and construction. Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. (qtd. in Hill 32)

Butler develops her understanding of performativity by using John Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* as a

crucial resource. Butler calls on his understandings of illocutionary force which is the intention in saying and especially perlocutionary force which is the effect of saying. (Chambers and Carver 38). Unlike Austin, Butler implies that the truth/falsehood dimension can be completely removed from the performative. For example, Butler argues that under the prevailing practices, —gender is made to comply with a model of truth and falsity which not only contradicts its own performative fluidity, but serves a social policy of gender regulation and control" (Digeser 663). In other words, Butler explains Austin's concept of the illocutionary force of performatives as —the turning of words into acts in a way subject to misuse, misfire and failure" (Tomares 80). She argues that failure to reach consensus on the meaning of a single word presents the word's possibility of mutability:

[I]f utterances can be the bearers of equivocal meanings, then their power is, in principle, less unilateral and sure than it appears. Indeed, the equivocality of the utterance means that it might not always mean in the same way, that its meaning might be turned or derailed in some significant way, and that words that seek to injure might well miss their mark and produce an effect counter to the one that is intended. The disjuncture between utterance and meaning is the condition of possibility for revising the performative, of the performative as the repetition of its prior instance, a repetition that is at once a reformulation. (Tomares, 80)

This point of view can be considered as a way to elaborate how some speeches and utterances with respect to the construction of female identity can be rooted in repetition and the new performativity of female behaviour can open some ways to reformulate it. Butler reacted and engaged with problems that arise when performativity refers to both language and gender: —It may seem that there is a difference between the embodying or performing of gender norms and the performative use of discourse. Are these two different

senses of =performativity' or do they converge as modes of citationality?" (Weiss, 77). She later addresses the instability that ensues when attaching language philosophy onto speculations about the body, and Butler argues that the two are invariably related:

The speech act is at once performed (and thus theatrical, presented to an audience, subject to interpretation), and linguistic, inducing a set of effects through its implied relation to linguistic conventions. If one wonders how a linguistic theory of the speech act relates to bodily gestures, one need only consider that speech itself is a bodily act with specific linguistic consequences. Thus speech belongs exclusively neither to corporeal presentation nor to language and its status as word and deed is necessarily ambiguous. (Weiss, 77)

Austin's theory of performativity can lead to an understanding of how some utterances create the construction of female identity in society and there is a force beyond these speeches to create a regularised female identity. Lisa Disch in her article, *Judith Butler and the Politics of the Performative* emphasizes that Butler is first and foremost a feminist theorist whose —commitments to feminism are probably her primary commitments" (545). Butler holds an influential but controversial place in contemporary feminist and democratic theory as —she has pursued these commitments by the way of unrelenting critique of feminism as an identity politics" (545). Borgerson asserts that the examination of the bibliographies of Butler's works and those which reference or draw from her reveals the extent of her influence in other fields such as queer theory, feminist theory, race studies, film studies, literary studies, sociology, politics, and philosophy. Butler's work arises —against essentialist understandings of identity and existence; culture and biology; and relationships between gender and sex - that is, femininity's link to the female, and masculinity's link to the male" (1).

Disch goes on to state that Butler is not a post-feminist but she is responding to the numbers of —women who, while, leading lives that the movement made possible, repudiate feminism for what they perceive to be its intolerance, anger, and insistence on representing them as sexual victims || (545). Gamble also asserts that Butler is one of the foremost theorists —working within the area of deconstructive feminism, and her work questions unproblematic notions of femaleness" (167).

Gamble continues that —gender distinctions only have meaning within a phallogocentric order built on a system of binary difference" (164). Sara Salih in her article, —On Judith Butler and Performativity" argues that Butler has collapsed the sex/gender distinction to argue that —there is no sex that is not always already gender. In fact, all bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence and there is no existence that is not social which means that there is no natural body that pre-exists its cultural inscription" (55).

This paper will elaborate my idea of how Atwood's protagonist creates new gender and performs her gender differently. It will elaborate what gender they should perform and how they perform their gender in various ways. Alexandra Merley Hill in her thesis *Maternal Drag: Identity, Motherhood, and Performativity in the Works of Julia Franck* states that Butler introduces performativity as a mode of analysis or approach to issues of language, culture and society —performativity is the discursive mode by which ontological effects are installed" (Brickell, 26). It is relevant to the main point of this study in which Butler's mode of performativity can construct the new performativity for the identity of the female protagonists and it works in a way to subvert the hegemonic norms of gender identity. This study will look at the usual performance of female behaviours that is imposed by language, convention, and cultural norms and will create a new performativity for female gender identity. Salih in her book, *Judith Butler* goes on to state that for Butler:

Gender is an act that brings into being what it names: in this context, a =masculine' man or a =feminine' woman. Gender identities are constructed and constituted by language, which means that there is no gender identity that precedes language. If you like, it is not that an identity =does' discourse or language, but the other way around - language and discourse =do' gender. There is no =I' outside language since identity is a signifying practice, and culturally intelligible subjects are the effects rather than the causes of discourses that conceal their workings. It is in this sense that gender identity is performative (64).

According to Butler:

Gender categories female/male, woman/man, girl/boy - are brought into being performatively. This is an anti-essentialist position and these categories are not imported into culture or society from —the nature" outside but rather are fundamentally shaped through discourse. For example, the proclamation —It's a girl!" that is uttered at birth is the initiator of a process of —girling" the female subject (Brickell, 26).

Jonathan D. Culler in his article, *Philosophy and Literature: The Fortunes of the Performative* explains that Butler poses the question of the difference between the performing of gender norms and the performative use of language: Butler questions whether there —are these two different senses of performativity or do they converge as modes of citationality in which the compulsory character of certain social imperatives becomes subject to a more promising deregulation?" (514). Butler takes care not to answer this question directly, but it is the notion of the citation of norms, important in Derrida's account of the performative, that brings together the performative utterance and the gender performative (514).

For Butler, the expressions of both gender and sexuality are widely understood to arise naturally and correspond logically to some real substance of the self. In fact, they are entrenched behaviours that produce the illusion of an originary substance: —Repeated and reified over time, the specific acts of gender and sexuality become (mis)perceived as the general facts of gender and sexuality” (Kopelson, 17). In fact, —gender is not something one is, it is something one does, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a doing rather than a being” (Salih 62). Butler elaborates this idea in the first chapter of *Gender Trouble*:

Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender. (Salih, 62)

In point of fact, by insisting on the importance of the repetition of obligatory norms in the production of performative effects, Culler mentions that Butler takes up the model of authoritative speech, such as the utterances of judges, umpires, and others who declare what is what.

Performative acts are forms of authoritative speech: most performatives, for instance, are statements which, in the uttering, also perform a certain action and exercise binding power. Implicated in a network of authorization and punishment, performatives tend to include legal sentences, baptisms, inaugurations, declarations of ownership, statements that not only perform an action but confer a binding power on the action performed. (514)

Parker and Sedgwick suggest that the two strands of performativity expressed variously through the works of Austin and Butler have a common meeting point in their interrogations of the relation of speech to act (Austin) and of act to identity (Butler). For Austin, —the performative occurs in a single act, whereas for Butler the performative is a regular repetition of an act. Hence, the =act‘ or the doing of something is pivotal to the two notions of the performative” (Mallan, 3). Butler also follows Jacques Derrida in *Signature, Event, Context* her accounts of performativity and citationality of the ways in which language acts rely on a barely articulated analogy with ritual action (actions that signify, according to some ritual theorists) (Hollywood, 96). Culler insists that for Butler, it is in the repeated citation of norms, the application of rules, that the authority of a mode of speaking is generated. —There is no power construed as subject that acts, but only a reiterated acting that is power in its persistence and instability” (514). In *Mimesis: Butler, Visual Practice, Tragic Art*, Dafna Ganani Tomares writes a description of Butler’s performativity as a form of power:

A performative act is one which brings into being or enacts that which it names, and so marks the constitutive or productive power of discourse. In other words, a performative is a term that turns a word into an action but in a manner restricted to the discourse in which it appears; representing the task it describes in a limited way, a performative act regulates the description or discourse mobilizing it. In fact, performativity suggests that —there is no true self that exists prior to its immersion in culture. Rather, we are shaped and formed by our surroundings and our interactions with others.” (Tomares, 80). According to Felschow, Butler mentions in *Gender Trouble*:

Acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means (21).

It would appear that the behaviour western culture normally designates as male or female is not the result of some essential feminine or masculine quality that we possess at birth. Feminine and masculine identities are constructed by the culture that we live in. According to Hill, the theatrical quality of Butler’s theory would lead one to think of gender as a performance, which it is, of sorts, but for Butler there is an important difference between performance and performativity (32). Actually, Butler is not claiming that gender is a performance, and she distinguishes between performance and performativity (32). In an interview given in 1993 she emphasized the importance of this distinction and argued that —whereas performance presupposes a pre-existing subject, performativity contests the very notion of the subject” (Salih 63). Butler states in her interview that:

Let’s think about the difference between performativity and performance. I was somewhat surprised that people took performativity to be nothing other than performance when they read *Gender Trouble*. In that book, I used the example of the drag queen to try to make the case that the performance of gender that the drag queen offers is no less real and no less true than the performance of gender that any ordinary man or woman might perform, that it gives us a kind of allegory of the mundane performance of gender, and that we are all, all the time, as it were, performing gender. The drag show is a moment in which that performance is rendered explicit. It’s not an aberration from the norm; it shows us how the norm actually functions, how the norm is instituted through our bodies, through our stylistics, through our bodily gestures. [...]

Butler continues her discussion in the interview:

So, I'm not opposed to performance, and in fact performance is a crucial part of performativity, but there's something else that's going on: the performance of a gender is also compelled by norms that I do not choose. I work within the norms that constitute me. I do something with them. Those norms are the condition of my agency, and they also limit my agency; they are that limit and that condition at the same time. What I can do is, to a certain extent, conditioned by what is available for me to do within the culture and by what other practices are and by what practices are legitimating (Olson and Worsham 751-752).

Performance requires that there be a subject doing the acting. As Butler points out, —A great deal of feminist theory and literature has [...] assumed that there is a =doer= behind the deed, || a natural conclusion as agency presupposes an agent. Yet, Butler speaks not of performance but of the performativity of gender, because she believes that no subject exists prior to or behind the act (Hill, 32). Norman K. Denzin in his article, *Much Ado About Goffman*, reports that Butler reminds us that —there are no original performances, or identities, no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured || (112). Butler states that:

The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body ... What we take to be an —internal || feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts...There is no subject who decides on its gender...on the contrary, gender is part of what decides the subject (Weiss, 76)

As a matter of fact, every performance is an imitation, a form of mimesis. According to Butler:

... if heterosexuality is an impossible imitation of itself, an imitation that performatively constitutes itself as the original, then the imitative parody of =heterosexuality=... is always and only an imitation, a copy of a copy, for which there is no original (112).

As Kulick later explained, —performance is not the same as performativity ... performance is something that a subject does. Performativity, on the other hand, is the process through which the subject emerges" (Weiss, 76). In other words, there is no before, no pre-existing or original gender, which a subject tries to imitate. Instead, all gender is a copy of a copy of a copy (Hill, 32). Butler explains the difference between performance and performativity in this way:

The performance of a gender is also compelled by norms that I do not choose. I work within the norms that constitute me. I do something with them. Those norms are the condition of my agency, and they also limit my agency ... gender performativity is not just drawing on the norms that constitute, limit, and condition me; it's

also delivering a performance within a context of reception, and I cannot fully anticipate what will happen. (Howland, 13)

2. Gender as a performativity and Gender as a Subversion

Margaret Atwood is one of those few modern Canadian novelists in English, who have attempted to understand closely the predicament of their female protagonists and asks for a balanced, harmonious man-woman relationship in which two sexes are presented as balancing each other and not a battle of sexes or a winning or losing game. Atwood's novels reveal an intense awareness of the relation between bonding and bondage, i.e. between a woman's need for connection with others and her equally strong need for freedom and independence. She is concerned with the treatment of woman as normal human beings and feels that she must be allowed her imperfections and criticizes the social system that assigns roles to the sexes and categorically labels them as inferior or superior, sinful or chaste. She is intensely preoccupied with women fighting against female norms of life-sexuality, a dichotomy between career and the claims of the family (Neeru, 2). Most of Atwood's novels struggle with the politics of gender and deal with women's experience in a male-dominated society. She depicts the silent and hidden operations of gender and confronts its politics, thereby recommending the rewriting of women's history. She demands demolition of the gender system and hopes for a new world in which men and women are equal at every level of existence (Neeru, 19). This point of view can be elaborated through this research and it will investigate how the subjectivity of female identity can be reconstructed. W.S. Kottiswari in the book, *Postmodern Feminist Writers* also notes Atwood uses such devices as irony, symbolism, self-conscious narrators, and makes skilful use of postmodern methods in order to explore the relationship between humanity and nature, the dark side of human behaviour and power as it pertains to gender and politics. She is popular with both literary scholars and the reading public, and Atwood has helped to define and identify the goals of contemporary Canadian literature and has earned a famous reputation among feminist writers for her examination of women's issues (11). Kottiswari continues to add that:

Atwood is an extremely versatile writer and in every novel she takes up the conventions of a different narrative form such as Gothic, romance, fairy tale, spy thriller, science fiction or history-working within those conventions and reshaping them. Her writing insistently challenges the limits of traditional genres. Her novels challenge the conventions of realism while working within them. She pays attention not only to the ways in which stories may be told but also to the function of language itself; the slipperiness of words and double operation of language as symbolic representation and as an agent for changing our modes of perception" (11).

The way in which she writes can be placed under the question of linguistic construction of words for construction of gender which can lead to the construction of female gender in society. Atwood's writing has had a remarkable influence on contemporary writing by women, and has brought the re-writing of genre fiction to the fore as a form of cultural critique for postmodernist and other contemporary writing. She speaks and problematizes experiences of women and girls in powerfully moving ways:

Her language is beautiful, perceptibly chosen, highlighting ways in which power controls language and shapes people's lives. She depicts history as a partial, often subjectivity and politically, shaped construction, and exposes gendered roles as social and cultural constructions, utilizing different forms of expression, different discourse. Atwood exposes constraints, suggesting that behaviors, roles, representation, and versions *could be different*" (Wisker, 9).

Margaret Atwood courageously examines culture and her concern with the binary construction of female and male which can help this study to elaborate how female characters can subvert what forms them as a feminine. Patricia F. Goldblatt also in *Reconstructing Margaret Atwood's Protagonists* recognizes that in her novels, Margaret Atwood creates situations in which women, suffer by the rules and inequalities of their societies, they discover that they must reconstruct braver, self-reliant personae in order to survive. —It is not too far from the Canadian blueprint of the voyageur faced with an inclement, hostile environment, these women struggle to overcome and to change systems that block and inhibit their security" (275). Atwood's pragmatic women are drawn from —women in the 1950s and 1960s: young women blissfully building their trousseaus and imagining a paradise of silver bells and picket fences" (275). Harold Bloom also shares the same sentiment, when he recognizes that in her novels:

Atwood has made constant use of the double voice, depicting characters at war with themselves and their environments. Through intertextual allusions, alterations in narrative point of view, and the use of the unconscious, Atwood shows the way in which the self is constructed from contradictory impulses, some more societally acceptable than others. The emphasis in each of her novels, as Linda Hutcheon has argued, is the movement from product to process, or the realization of her protagonists that they are not merely objects to be acted upon, but dynamic subjects (21)

This point of view is also manifested in Margaret Atwood's novel *Alias Grace*. Fiona Tolan in her book, *Margaret Atwood, Feminism and Fiction*, mentions that:

Alias Grace apparently enters into the project of improving lost female histories and giving voice to the silenced woman of the past. But Atwood

also moves far beyond early feminist reconstructions of forgotten or muted feminine experience, and challenges, not just the assumption that there is a stable subject to be recovered from the historical record, but also the systems of power and desire that can be unwittingly exposed in the attempted construction of another person's identity (222-223).

Burkhard Niederhoff also mentions in his article, *How to Do Things with History: Researching Lives in Carol Shields' Swann and Margaret Atwood's Alias Grace*, that the character Swann is about a real nineteenth-century woman, the servant Grace Marks, whose case is amply documented in archives. Atwood quotes many of the relevant documents, mostly in the epigraphs to the chapters, and she also connects Grace's life with large-scale historical events such as immigration from Ireland, the Rebellion of 1837 and the American Civil War (71). Erin Knapp, in his thesis, *Appropriating History in Margaret Atwood's the Handmaid's tale and Alias Grace* mentions that *Alias Grace* is a historical novel based on Atwood's own research into the real case of Grace Marks, a celebrated murderesses of the nineteenth century, and Victorian society itself. In the life of Grace and the lives of the characters around her, the restrictive aspects of the Victorian myth, the popularity of the Spiritualist movement, and nineteenth century theories on mental illness work together to document the gender inequality of the time period (1). According to Atwood, —the novel has its roots in the mud and part of mud is history; and part of the history we've had recently is the history of the women's movement, and the women's movement has influenced how people read, and what you can get away with" (qtd. in Knap). The story begins on 21st November 1843 when Grace Marks is found guilty of murdering her master Thomas Kinnear and his housekeeper Nancy Montgomery. Grace Marks must be locked up in the Kingston Penitentiary because of her foul sin and crime. In addition to her murder conviction, Grace is also convicted of madness and the trial sends her to the Asylum. It is 1851 and she has been imprisoned since the age of sixteen. The lawyers and the judges and the newspaper men have decided against her and her trial is long over and done with her, and the situation will not change anymore. Grace has entered the world of social policy of gender regulation, authority and control, and her identity is unknown as Atwood writes that —the true character of the historical Grace Marks remains an enigma" (Stenley, 372). This is the expression that constructs the gender of Grace Marks and she herself defines how she acts it:

It's 1851. I'll be twenty-four old next birthday. I've been shut up in here since the age of sixteen. I am a model prisoner, and give no trouble. That's what the Governor's wife says, I have overheard her saying it. I'm skilled at overhearing. If I am good enough and quiet enough, perhaps after all they will let me go; but it's not easy being quiet and good, it's like hanging on to the edge of a bridge when you've already fallen over; you don't seem to be moving, just dangling there, and yet it is taking all your strength (Atwood, 6).

This is how the legal system defines her. She has to follow the rules to gain her freedom. She is used to the repeated norms and she knows how she should exhibit her natural gender by being quiet and silent. Grace believes that her social identity is not the truth and it is a fake. For the regulatory regime, it is just a cultural ploy to confirm her gender identity:

That is what really interests them - the gentlemen and ladies both. They don't care if I killed anyone, I could have cut dozens of throats, it's only what they admire in a soldier, they'd scarcely blink. No: was I really a paramour, is their chief concern, and they don't even know themselves whether they want the answer to be no or yes (Atwood, 27).

Grace does not want to follow her performative role. So, she creates her own artificial mask and creates an ambiguity and suspicion among the lawful community. The first mask that she wears is being mad:

My hair is coming out from under my cap. Red hair of an ogre. A wild beast, the newspaper said. A monster. When they come with my dinner I will put the slop bucket over my head and hide behind the door, and that will give them a fright. If they want a monster so badly they ought to be provided with one. I never do such things, however. I only consider them. If I did them, they would be sure I had gone mad again. *Gone mad* is what they say, and sometimes *Run mad*, as if mad is a direction, like west; as if mad is a different house you could step into, or a separate country entirely. But when you go mad you don't go any other place. You stay where you are. And somebody else comes in (Atwood, 33).

The second mask that presents her artificial identity is memory. Memory can be considered as a subversive way to revolt against the gender which is attached to identity. The construction and script which is written for Grace's life is annihilated by her performance. She pretends that she has forgotten her repeated role in the past—I say, I can't remember, Sir. I can't remember what I dreamt last night. It was something confusing [...]. I have little enough of my own, no belongings, no possessions, no privacy to speak of, and I need to keep something for myself; and in any case, what would he have for my dreams, after all? || (Atwood, 101). Even when she wanted to talk about her childhood, she says to Dr. Simon, —I don't recall the place very well, as I was a child when I left it; only in scraps, like a plate that's been broken. There are always some pieces that would seem to belong to another plate altogether; and there are the empty spaces, where you cannot fit anything in" (Atwood, 103). Her unknown and vague identity also appears for Jeremiah, the peddler.

You would need a different name, of course; a French one or something foreign, because the people on this side of the ocean would find it hard to believe that a woman with the plain name of Grace had mysterious powers. The unknown is

always more wonderful to them than the known, and more convincing (Atwood, 268).

Grace revealing her mask and presenting the artificial construction of her gender is figured out firstly by Simon, "Grace's amnesia seems genuine enough," says Simon, (Atwood, 373). Even Dr. Mackenzie also expresses his doubts and suspicions:

Perhaps Grace Marks has merely been telling you what she needs to tell, in order to accomplish the desired end." "Which is?" asks Simon. —To keep the Sultan amused," says Mackenzie. —To keep the blow from falling. To forestall your departure, and make you stay in the room with her as long as possible." [...] What on earth would be the point of that?" says Simon. —Amusing me won't get her out of prison." "I don't suppose she really expects that" says Mackenzie. (Atwood, 377).

The dialogue between them manifests this point, when Dr. Simon hypothesizes about her; the reaction of others toward her artificial role is manifested:

"Oh Grace," moans the Governor's wife. "I thought better of you! All these years you have deceived us! || the voice is gleeful. —Stop talking rubbish," she says. —You've deceived yourselves! I am not Grace! Grace knew nothing about it!" [...] You are not Grace," says Simon. Despite the warmth of the room, he feels cold all over. —if you are not Grace, who are you?" "Cleft for me... Let me hide myself, in thee..." (Atwood, 401).

Even Dora also defines her, —She'll be without a name. She'll be an unknown woman, of the kind often found floating in canals or other bodies of water: Unknown Woman Found Floating in Canal" (Atwood, 410). Finally, Grace has won and liberates herself from the way she has been constructed and also from where she has been kept:

This almost unique malefactor received a pardon, and was conveyed to New York, where she changed her name, and soon afterwards married. For all the writer of these lines knows to the contrary, she is living still. Whether her appetite for murder had ever strongly asserted itself in the interval is not known, as she probably guards her identity by more than one alias. (Atwood, 438).

When she married, she felt:

As if my face was dissolving and turning into someone else's face [...] that it is, I thought, I have been rescued, and now I must act like someone who has been rescued. And so I tried. It was very strange to realize that I would not be a celebrated murderess any more, but seen perhaps as an innocent woman wrongly accused and imprisoned unjustly, or at least for too long a time, and an object of pity rather than of horror and fear. It took me some days to get used to the idea;

indeed, I am not quite used to it yet. It calls for a different arrangement of the face; but I suppose it will become easier in time. Of course to those who do not know my story I will not be anybody in particular. (Atwood, 443).

She could change and subvert what shaped her identity and created tension in the world of regulations and rules. Her subjectivity could be achieved. However she has to play a performance for another role. The role of a wife, which is considered for her after she changes her face that of a murderess.

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